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AN UNDERGRADUATE SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION MODEL FOR THE MULTIVERSITY.

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AN UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM IN A MULTIVERSITY SETTING (THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA) IS DESCRIBED, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS RELATED TO THIS EDUCATIONAL MODEL ARE RAISED. THE PROGRAM OFFERS A SINGLE-TRACK SEQUENCE WITH INNER FLEXIBILITY TO MEET THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF A DIVERSE STUDENT BODY. THE INTERDISCIPLINARY CURRICULUM CENTERS AROUND THREE CORE COURSES WHICH PROVIDE THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF SOCIAL WORK IDENTIFICATION AND INFORMATION. INSTEAD OF FIELD WORK, THE PRIMARY EMPHASIS IS ON LABORATORY COMPONENTS OF CORE COURSES WHICH ENCOURAGE VARIOUS LEVELS AND TYPES OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT. ADVISING IS HANDLED BY PROGRAM SPECIALISTS. A STUDY SPONSORED BY THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH SEEKS TO ANSWER SEVERAL FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EDUCATIONAL MODEL PRESENTED. IT IS HOPED THAT THE RESEARCH EFFORTS OUTLINED IN THE PAPER WILL BE THE BEGINNING OF A SYSTEMATIC ATTEMPT TO GAIN GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF PRE-SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN A LARGE UNIVERSITY AND MEANS OF IMPROVING SUCH A PROGRAM. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE AMERICAN ORTHOPSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION CONVENTION, (44TH ANNUAL MEETING), WASHINGTON, D.C., MARCH, 1967. (SK)

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An Undergraduate Social Work Education Model for the Multiversity

This paper is intended to serve two objectives. First, to provide the reader with a description of an undergraduate social work education program in a multiversity setting and second, to suggest a number of research questions related to this educational model that it is hoped can be investigated as a result of having been awarded an NIMH grant.

It should be clarified at the outset that the use of the term "model" in the title of this paper does not suggest that the program to be described is either an "ideal-type" or a "representative-type" program. The use of the term model is only meant to imply that a distinct conceptualization of an undergraduate social work education is included in the description to follow:

The University of Minnesota unquestionably fits the definition of what is today referred to as the "multiversity". With a campus containing 43,000 students, 35 professional schools and more than 100 possible undergraduate majors, the University of Minnesota provides a virtual labyrinth of educational departments and disciplines. Within this educational labyrinth exists a relatively sizeable and growing undergraduate social work education sequence. While the very size and complexity of the multiversity makes the visibility of any single program difficult, the pre-social work program at the University of Minnesota has enjoyed a 500% growth since 1954 to a level of 550 students.

Any description/analysis of the pre-social work program at the University of Minnesota requires consideration of each of the various components of the program. The following aspects of the program have been selected for comment: philosophy and objectives, structure, curriculum, field experience, advising and counseling, and the student association.

Philosophy and Objectives

The pre-social work sequence at the University of Minnesota is an outgrowth of a Training Course for Social and Civic Work established in 1917. Despite the early emphasis on graduate social work education at the University, an undergraduate program has survived and prospered to its current maximum enrollment size of approximately

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550 undergraduate majors. It is today among the largest undergraduate social work education programs in the United States.

In what may be considered its contemporary phase, the pre-social work sequence at the University of Minnesota has consciously attempted to maintain and enrich its liberal arts focus. The administrative location of the program within the university, the pre-requisite and requisite courses in the sequence and the nature of the social work offerings all reflect its identification with liberal education. The very connotation of the program as pre-professional implies that it is primarily intended as a foundation to graduate professional education. Although the pre-social work program is not markedly distinguishable from a variety of other interdisciplinary social science program, the designers of the sequence carry a deep conviction that a broad based liberal education in the social and physical sciences is the best preparation for a student pursuing any one of several career objectives in this field.

The ultimate educational objectives of the pre-social work sequence are identical to those articulated in most schools which offer social work education at the undergraduate level. The sequence is expected to adequately prepare students for any one of three career ends: (1) graduate education in social work, (2) immediate employment in the social work/social welfare area or (3) responsible lay interest and leadership in the social welfare field. The sequence operates on the assumption that the single-track that has been developed provides the best feasible preparation for anyone of these alternate career goals. It is believed that from citizen to graduate student, a broad based liberal education program which provides for the cultivation of the tools of conceptualization and analysis is preferable to a more technical, specialized training within some more circumscribed area of social welfare.

If there is a single bias in the sequence, it is that students are educated to see themselves as capable of controlling and/or changing the destiny of their world and of the institutions that comprise it. Information about the current make-up of the world becomes secondary to creating and instilling a critical attitude in the student about his society and to providing him with the motivation to make society a better place than he found it. If some rank order of our educational intentions were made, it would read as follows: The formation of attitudes takes primacy over the impartation of knowledge; the impartation of knowledge takes primacy over the development of clinical skills. The development of skill in a broader sense is limited largely to the development of skill in conceptualization and in the broad rudiments of problem-solving. Students are taught to view social institutions, including those in social welfare as malleable realities which can be used for humane purposes, not as fixed obstacles to progress. They are taught that their responsibility is not to serve institutions per se but to better serve clients by making institutions more responsive to client needs. An analysis of the syllabi of the core social work courses would provide ample documentation of these educational biases on the program.

Structure

In view of the strong identification with the liberal arts philosophy, it is not surprising that the pre-social work sequence is housed within the CLA and jointly administered by Sociology and the School of Social Work. The faculty members responsible for the sequence are employed by the Graduate School of Social Work, are all professionally educated social workers. The joint administration of the sequence is aimed to insure optimum communication between the Social Sciences and the Graduate School of Social Work at the undergraduate level.

The pre-social work sequence is an interdisciplinary program. As an interdisciplinary major (no minor), requiring some sixty of the 90 upper division credits, students are required to take upper division courses in psychology, child development, political science, economics, anthropology and sociology, as well as several core social work courses.

There is a great degree of flexibility within the sixty quarter credit upper division course requirements which permits creating and packaging a program that can be tailored to the individual needs and interests of most students.

Although a student may declare an intent to major in pre-social work upon arrival at the University, it is rare that a student is identified as a pre-social work major until he makes application for upper-division. Any student is free to enter the pre-social program if he or she is admissable to upper-division within the College of Liberal Arts. There is no screening or admission process other than the student's own declaration of intention to pursue this sequence. Although many rationalizations could be given for the absence of controlled entry into the program, the main reason for the absence of a screening process would be the demands on staff time this would require and the unwillingness to limit a student's free choice at this educational level.

Until the fall of 1965, only a single full-time social instructor and one part-time advisor were responsible for the sequence despite its size. In 1966, a second full-time position was created and the part-time advisor position converted into a full-time position. This year, as a result of our project grant, a third full-time instructor was added, with one of the previous instructors given responsibility for the research component of the project. This increase in full-time social work faculty was supplemented by the Department of Sociology which added a second full-time advisor. The undergraduate faculty therefore consists of three full-time trained social workers and two advisors without graduate social work training. Of the three instructors, none has less than three years teaching experience; the two advisors hold only a bachelor's degree and themselves are recent graduates of the pre-social work program.

Core Social Work Content

Three core social work courses are offered in the sequence: American Social Welfare (5 credits), Social Work Processes (3 credits) and Government and Social Welfare (3 credits). These three courses are taught several times throughout the year and are open to all students in the university who meet the pre-requisites (if any) for the courses. The first two of these courses are taught by social work

faculty and the third, by a former public welfare administrator located in the Department of Public Administration. All three of the courses are given at the junior or senior level.

The American Social Welfare course, referred to by students as the "great ideas and values" course, is designed to provide students with an understanding of the nature and form of society's institutional response to dealing with the socially related needs of its citizens. Basic to this course is helping the students make a connection between the evolving institution of social welfare and the underlying value orientations of a society. The course also provides for a careful analysis of the institutionalization of the helping process through the creation of various helping professions sanctioned by a society. Throughout an analytical and critical orientation towards the institutional nature of social welfare is developed with the purpose of helping students focus on change and new directions for policies and programs. A descriptive and informational approach to the study of social welfare is included only when necessary to support the aforementioned goal. The enrollment for this course is controlled at 60 students per class section.

In the social work processes course a somewhat different path is pursued. In this course, the students are introduced to "the helping process" and to the substantive knowledge base upon which it has been developed. Within the broad framework of helping theory, the social work helping approach is more carefully analyzed. A conscious attempt here is made to encourage the student to identify with the professional role and to both cognitively and affectively appreciate the responsibility and professional nature of social work interventions. The fundamental objective of the course, however, is to assist students in understanding the logic of social work interventions (the relationship of theory to practice), rather than to assist the students in developing skills in the intervention process. This is the key distinction which is made between the nature of a pre-professional education and professional training. The average enrollment for each section of this course is somewhere between 30 and 40 students.

The government and social welfare course is primarily a course in a critical understanding of all social security programs, including public welfare policies and programs, with emphasis on the administrative and policy making processes as they operate within this institution. This course is not tallied and serves up to 150 students per class.

Although there is no course entitled field work in our curriculum, all students are expected to have been involved in some formal helping experience before graduation. This requirement is controlled through the social work processes course, which includes the completion of a field experience requirement before credit may be given for the course.

In addition to the core courses mentioned, a variety of other courses may be elected by students which cover some aspect of social welfare (e.g., Adult Probation and Parole, Law and Legal System for Correctional and Social Workers (also Soc. 105?)). Related to these non-core courses is a sequence of three 3 credit Honor/Independent study courses which can be individually designed for students upon their request, with the social work instructors approval. These courses provide the instructor with a great creative opportunity to stimulate and assist students in exploring research questions and special topics related to social welfare which capture their interest or meet a special need. These course numbers have been exploited by instructors to develop ad hoc seminars for selected superior students. This past spring, for example, a seminar on "the therapeutic interview" was developed for ten interested students who planned to enter the social work field immediately upon graduation. An example of a research project was the nine credit research study of "the pre-social work student" carried out by an honors candidate bound for graduate school. The results of this exceptional research project are due for publication in the Social Work Education Reporter. Through the honors and independent study option, the social work instructor may assign research interested students faculty advisors from other departments in the university, a process which has enhanced our inter-departmental communication immensely. Our average enrollment in this Honors/Independent sequence is about fifteen students per quarter.

Field Experience

With a minimal emphasis upon skill development in the helping process, field experience is valued for other reasons and has been largely molded to meet these other objectives. The primary purposes of field exposure have been to assist students to test their career choice, to enhance their life experiences for personal developmental reasons, to stimulate their interest in social science theory, and to provide an outlet for their desire to serve others. Consequently, rather than formalize a field work program involving placements in traditional social work agencies, a variety of short-term exposures and community involvements are developed through laboratory exercises associated with the core social work courses previously mentioned. Such laboratory exercises may then be controlled by a proportionately small teaching faculty. It would be impossible, even if desired, to develop and supervise agency field placements for so large a student body.

The students in our university suffer from no want of exciting field experience opportunities and summer work programs. The demand for the college student in social service programs in the community is so great than an estimated 20% of the student body are able to find part-time paid work positions in the field. Many others seek out volunteer opportunities on their own simply to build up a body of work experience.

Advising

One of the recent major innovations in our pre-social work program has been in the development of our advising program. In place of a part-time trained social work advisor, we have chosen to employ two full-time advisors with bachelors degrees who have graduated from our own program. These advisors function in the sequence like an intake/brief service unit. They handle the mechanical registration and

advising chores for all students; theyprovide up to date materials and information on graduate education and employment, volunteer work opportunities; they arrange special events programs designed to provide students with career information, scholarship information, etc; and, they act as advisors to the pre-social work student association. In cases where the information needed or the judgement required goes beyond their training and experience, they refer the student to one of the social work instructors.

The use of the BA level advisor has freed the social work instructor to concentrate more fully on teaching and research and only more selectively on advising and counseling students. It has resulted in a tremendous saving in faculty time.

Student Association:

Despite the anti-student organization feeling of many students on our campus, the pre-social work students formed a student association this past year. Known as S.W.I.R.L. (Social Work Information and Referral League), the organization seeks to stimulate interest and information about community service opportunities among students and faculty throughout the University. Through the activities of S.W.I.R.L., the visibility of the pre-social work program on campus has increased immeasurably.

By keeping its organizational operations simple and its programs selective, the student association has sponsored some excellent programs. In addition, through operating in an ad hoc nature, the students believe that each successive class of students will be able to collectively express itself in creative ways. Possibly infected by the bias of the dangers of institutionalization which permeates the pre-social work program, the students hope to avoid such pitfalls in their own organization.

Summary

In review, the pre-social work program at the University is a sizeable program in a sizeable university. It offers a single-track sequence with inner flexibility which requires the creative capacity and energy of the undergraduate faculty to insure that the diverse needs of a diverse student body are adequately met. The curriculum is interdisciplinary and centers around three core content courses which serves to provide the primary source for social work information and identification. In place of field work, primary emphasis is placed on laboratory components of core courses which encourage various levels and types of community involvement. The social work faculty largely directs its energy to teaching and research, with the advising function given over to advising specialists developed out of the program itself.

Research Project Plans:

Apart from assisting in the strengthening our teaching and counseling program through the employment of additional staff, the NIMH grant has supplied us with the opportunity to place under scrutiny the educational model just described. With the paucity of previous research in this area the field for research is literally wide open. However, after considering the importance of the large university in supplying the needed manpower for the social welfare field, it was felt that only the bread and butter type questions should be investigated at this time.

The questions that we have therefore chosen to explore are basic and on the surface may appear embarrassingly simple. Yet if answers to these questions can be produced, the data necessary to guide us in future curriculum planning and development will be provided. The questions that we articulated in our original grant proposal were as follows:

1. Who are our students (what kind of student do we recruit, educate and pass on to the field of social work?)?

2. Why do our students choose a pre-social work program (what are the antecedent and motivational factors that influence a students decision to enter the pre-social work sequence)?

3. How are our students affected by the sequence (to what extent and in what ways are our students different at the end of their educational experience)?

4. How adequate is our single-track sequence in preparing students for the several career goals considered legitimate objectives of a pre-social work program?

5. What impact does field experience of various types and intensities have in preparing our students for these different career objectives?

6. What effect does a more intensive counseling and advising program have on the performances of our students and on their career choices?

7. What happens to our students following their graduation from the sequence (in terms of occupational choice, mobility and stability?) Can an instrument be devised for predicting occupational choice and stability?

The discussion of the research plans addressed to the above questions must be considered as tentative at this time, since the majority of our efforts this year will be spent on the development of the requisite designs and on pilot studies aimed at tightening these designs. In some respects, however, we have a head start in this undertaking because of the several previous research efforts that have been carried out at the University of Minnesota related to undergraduate social work education. The most recent was the previously mentioned pilot study conducted by one of our honors students.

Prior to explicating in more detail the nature of our research plans, the process for arriving at the questions to be studied merits mention. The research staff during the past summer and fall sought the counsel and advise of a significant number of agency persons and faculty in neighboring departments. A large number of suggestions related to both theory and methodology were provided by these informants. Several of these research minded informants have volunteered to act as advisors and consultants to staff investigating certain of the above questions.

Some preliminary work on the research design has been done, apart from the many hours of thought that has already been expended. The fruits of this labor will now be reported.

Study of the Characteristics of the Students:

Basic to the master design is the plan to study selected characteristics of our pre-social work student population. The variables to be explored in this regard include demographic and identifying characteristics, knowledge of the field, attitudes, values, motives, academic performance, life experiences and the future aspirations of the students.

Much of the data sought is already available in the students personal files[1]. Additional data of a general nature will be gathered through a supplementary schedule

1) Included in the students files are the results of the Strong Vocational Inventory, the Minnesota College Entrance Test and the students high school rank.

questionnaire administered to all pre-social work students at the time of their application to upper division. This data, collected on all students in the program, will be coded for computer analysis. The method and procedures of data collection have already been devised and this part of the study is currently underway.

A more intensive study of additional characteristics of the student population will be carried out by means of a random sample of new upper division students beginning next fall. With this smaller sample, attention will be given to an assesment of the students knowledge, values, and motives. A number of instruments are being considered for use in collecting such data. Under consideration at this time are the Oren-Kidneigh Attitudes Inventory, a National DHEW Merit System examination, Gordons Survey of Interpersonal Values and the Thematic Aperception Test. The possibility of developing special instruments better fitting the specific interest of this study has not been discarded. The supplemention of data collected by means of standardized instruments through in/depth interviews is also under consideration.

A number of pilot studies are being developed to explore selected aspects of this part of the research. These projects are being conducted by senior honors students under the direction of the research director. In two of these studies, the students are being advised by faculty from the Department of Sociology. The studies under way respectively cover the following topics:

1. The religious affiliations, activities and beliefs of the presocial work students.
2. Selected motives of the pre-social work student - the needs for nurturence, affiliation and achievement.
3. Life experiences of the pre-social work student.

A variety of designs and methods for data collection will be employed in these pilot studies. Several will use comparative control samples, although in most cases the studies are exploratory rather than experimental. On the basis of the experience and findings of these studies, some modified replication can be conducted on the new study sample next fall.

Motivation for Entry Into the Sequence:

The above mentioned pilot studies all share as a matter of prime interest the relationship between their variable of interest and the students choice of a pre-social work major. In addition, data from the students personal file and from

the supplementary questionnaire will provide further clues regarding the reasons for the students career choice.

It will be noted that consideration is being given to the study of the students underlying motives (needs) as these may relate to their choice of a social work career. It assumes that a students statements about his reasons for entry (his rhetorical responses) may not be fully in accord with his deeper motives. It is hoped that some conceptual framework for the analysis of motives can be identified and adequate tools for their measurement found. A number of theoretical formulations have been developed for the study of motives and several are currently under consideration. Knowledge about the students 1) need to nurture, care for others, 2)need for leadership and independence and, 3) need for support, security and conformity ane considered important to gain a full understanding of the type of student we are attracting to the program and his perception of a social work career.

Change Attributable to the Educational Experience:

In our master design, it is anticipated that some of the instruments drawn upon to provide us a measure of "who are students"are in terms of their knowledge, attitudes, values and motives at their point of entry into the sequence can serve as a basis for remeasurement at the point of their exit from the sequence. This would allow us to develop a before/after design in which the experimental sample would serve as its own control. To what extent it is possible to approach a more classical research design through employing some kind of comparative control group is questionable. Without such a control sample we recognize that it will be impossible to determine to what extent "observed change" is a function of the independent variable of the undergraduate educational experience or a function of some unspecified intervening variable.

At this time we are unsure of the sensitivity of the instruments which will be employed in this phase of data collection to identify changes which may be expected to occur. We recognize that the pre-social work program claims to influence and effect the knowledge, attitudes and value orientations of the students. However, unless this can be shown, we have little evidence upon which to credit future performances of our students in the graduate education or the field to the influences of the pre-social work education program,

Adequacy of the Single-Track Sequence:

The claim that the single track sequence adequately prepares students for diverse career objectives presents a formidable research problem. One of the thoughts being studied would be to compare the performances of our graduates in Graduate School of Social Work with the performances of other graduate students who have not had the benefit of a pre-social work education. The performance criteria are available for such a study and the study could be conducted on an ex post facto basis utilizing information in students files.

A similar approach might be followed in studying the adequacy of our preparation of students for immediate employment at the BA level. Using merit system scores and performance evaluation ratings, we could compare our graduates with the performances on these criteria variables with other persons with different types of undergraduate preparation.

A further approach considered would be to include in our plans for a follow-up study of our graduates some subjective evaluation by our graduates of the adequacy of their undergraduate experience in preparing them for the career position which they hold. Such subjective evaluation of the pre-social work program would not be without merit irrespective of the graduates objective performance. In a pilot follow-up study of a small sample of our graduates begun in 1965 and now in its second year, some interesting findings have been obtained which have assisted us in making several adjustments in our program. This might be considered our version of consumer research.

Impact of Field Experiences:

The attempt to study the value of field experiences to the preparation of the pre-social work student again presents some difficult, if not in this case, some insurmountable research problems. Since students are encouraged to gain field experience over and above that associated with the several core social work courses, it is difficult to gain complete control over the field experience variable.

Even an attempt to study the relationship between field experience and school and/or post-school performance on an ex post facto basis is of limited value since we do not know what kinds of students choose to exploit field experience opportunities. It is possible, in fact probable, that students with deeper prior commitments to social work or with greater innate capacities seek out field experiences. Therefore, the performance of a student may not be caused or influenced by field work, but is in essence an effect of some other intervening variable.

We have considered nonetheless a controlled study in which students in one section of the Social Work Processes course will be assigned field experiences while a comparable section of students would not be given such an assignment. Their performances in the class would then be compared and some evidence regarding the benefits of field experience towards enhancing the learning of certain conceptual materials could be obtained.

A more simplified approach might be taken by asking students in the follow-up to evaluate the field experiences which they may have had during their undergraduate careers in terms of the contribution made to their preparation for their current position.

Advising and Counseling Program:

Since project funds have been used to strengthen the teaching faculty so that class sizes could be reduced and contact with students increased, some investigation of the value of this strengthening must be made. At this point, our plan is to record the nature and frequency of faculty contacts with students over a period of time. A comparison of the scholastic performances and the career decisions of those students who have received most attention with the students who have received least

faculty attention could be made. No attempt would be made to establish any sort of control group from whom such contacts would be withheld. Rather, the study would be conducted on an ex post facto basis, with the understanding that such factors as the aggressiveness of students and the personal preferences of faculty for some students will be operating and would confound the findings.

The Follow-Up Study:

In view of the limited duration of the project, time does not permit a follow-up study of the core study sample which will be identified and drawn in the fall of 1967. In lieu of this, an additional sample of students graduating in spring of 1967 and 1968 will be drawn for purposes of follow up. Both of these classes could be assumed to be representative of our student population and would have been a product of the model under study.

The follow-up study envisioned would seek to gather data regarding career position and the factors surrounding that position, plus some subjective assessment of the pre-social work program in preparing the student for that position. In addition more specific evaluations of various aspects of the pre-social work program will be sought. It is hoped that such a follow-up could be repeated for a number of years so that information about occupational mobility and stability could be obtained.

Summary:

Tha master design envisioned consists of a number of separate and, in some cases, related studies which seek to answer several of fundamental questions about our educational model. It is recognized that the study is primarily exploratory and that the results to be obtained will be far from conclusive. Hopefully the research efforts outlined will be the beginning of a systematic attempt to gain greater understanding of the nature of pre-social work education in the large university and the ways in which such a program might be improved.